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NEW YORK Confidential

By LEE MORTIMER

Rock Hudson, whizzing through from Rome to Hollywood, took time to champagne with Victoria Palmer at the Chateau Henri IV ... Morton Downey, back from the Inauguration, a solo diner at Sherm Billingsley's Stork, but surrounded by a lot of hungry politicians who figure he's got an IN. I should say my dear old friend does have one... Today's Hope Hampton item puts her with Prince Lalit of India at Max Loew's Viennese Lantern... Paula Prentiss, one of the bright new faces in MGM's "Where the Boys Are" and actor-director Richard Benjamin have been doing the Downey's bit every night before her return to the Coast for the lead opposite Steve McQueen in "The Honeymoon Machine"... Joe Atsumi, who runs a beauty shop in Brazil, came to Calif. to study cosmetics at L.A. State College and be near his successful sister, Nobu McCarthy ... Anyway I want to give three great big cheers for Miiko Taka who makes a big comeback in "Cry for Happy" from the best seller by my pal Capt. George Campbell. Campbell, by the way, runs Crusade for Freedom's Radio Free Europe.

Nicky Hilton's mother-in-law, Mrs. Horace Schmidlapp, seated at the Harwyn next to Nick's former step mama, Zsa Zsa who was with Bob Straile... Jim Hagerty, at his first week to work as ABC vice prexy, getting more requests for autographs than the movie stars... Nobody, including Castro, knows how it happens but three nights running Havana has been totally blacked out while parachutes drop arms preparing for a Cuba Libre invasion... Which reminds me that Columbia Rossi, the first American news-woman arrested there, reports that Anna Magnani is hot on her heels in "Titane Susic"... Talking about books MUST reading is "Betrayal at the UN" which is the story of Paul Bang-Jensen. DeWitt Copp and Marshall Peck did an exciting job for Devin Adair... After reading it you'll wonder why we allow these things to be...